

Samuel Probst Farm
Legislative Route 18011, Farrandsville
Road, approx. 2.1 miles northwest of
the Jay Street Bridge
Lock Haven Vicinity
Clinton County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-5523

HABS
PA
18-LOKHA.V,
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
MID-ATLANTIC REGION, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19106

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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SAMUEL PROBST FARM

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Location: Legislative Route 18011, the Farrandsville Road, approximately 2.1 miles northwest of the Jay Street Bridge, Lock Haven vicinity, Clinton County, Pennsylvania

USGS Lock Haven Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 18.293040.4559530

Present Owner and Occupant:

Charles Probst
R.D. #2, Box 175
Lock Haven, Pennsylvania 17745

Present Use:

Residence.

Significance:

The Samuel Probst Farm, in the ownership of the Probst family since 1906, is a significant and distinguishable entity as an early-twentieth-century agricultural complex. The farm, including a front gable-and-wing farmhouse, bank barn, summer kitchen, and corn crib, demonstrates early-twentieth-century construction and design techniques and individually, the farm's buildings exhibit architectural integrity. The Probst Farm is architecturally significant as one of the few remaining agricultural complexes in Clinton County dating from the early twentieth century that retains a number of associated outbuildings. The Samuel Probst Farm is historically significant as a property which exhibits a continuity of agricultural use from the early nineteenth century throughout the twentieth century. The property known as the Probst Farm today was part of a larger farm begun by Adam Smith in 1803 although no above-ground historic resources remain from that period.

I. HISTORIC CONTEXT

Woodward Township is located in Clinton County's Ridge and Valley system broken by foothills from the Allegheny High Plateaus. Much of the area now known as Clinton County and Woodward Township was forested at the time white settlers arrived in the 1760s. Monseytown Flats, the flat floodland area of Woodward Township "located on the level bottom (on the north bank of the West Branch of the Susquehanna River) a short distance above Lockport," was occupied by the Monsey Indians prior to white settlement and was destroyed in 1763 by Col. John Armstrong. A large number of wigwams were demolished and many acres of corn were destroyed during the raid. Traces of the village were perceptible long after the arrival of the white settlers (*Lock Haven Express* 1942: 251).

The Stanwix Treaty of 1769 between the Indians and the Penns made land along the West Branch as far as the Lycoming Creek available in plots of 300 acres. The bottom land along the West Branch of the Susquehanna River was claimed quickly. However, it was not until 1784 that the Penns made their last purchase from the Indians and the valley was offered to settlers for sale on the north side of the Susquehanna River in the Monseytown area (*Lock Haven Express* 1942: 251).

The development of the West Branch canal system in 1834 (see HAER No. PA-188) began a move to access the area's massive supply of virgin forest. Woodward Township was organized in 1841 and named for the Honorable George W. Woodward, then President Judge of the District. The township is primarily hilly and forested, except for a few hundred acres along the river that were cleared and cultivated in the 1840s, including the land occupied by the Probst Farm today. The soil along the river was considered favorable for the production of fruit, grass, grain, and potatoes (Linn 1883: 669). In 1844, Clinton County was formed from sections of Lycoming and Centre Counties and contained twenty-one townships, including Woodward Township, seven boroughs, and one city, Lock Haven. The county is divided by the West Branch of the Susquehanna River, which is its principal drainage system (Hannegan 1986: 1).

Clinton County's agricultural history is somewhat diverse, with dairy and beef cattle farms prevalent in the Bald Eagle, Nittany, Sugar, and Nippenose valleys; high yields of tobacco on the Great Island well into the twentieth century; and vegetables and field corn prevalent on the farms in Woodward Township along the Susquehanna. A number of the farms in Woodward Township also produced tobacco from as early as 1860 up into the twentieth century. From available agricultural census data, it can be determined that over the fifty-year period from 1860 to 1910, tobacco was by far Clinton County's most important crop. There was a significant increase in the production of tobacco from 36,000 pounds produced in 1870 to 993,401 pounds produced in 1880. At least 77,000 pounds of the county's tobacco crop were produced in Woodward Township in 1880. Cultivation peaked in 1900 with over one million pounds reported. Other large production crops included Indian corn, wheat, oats, and potatoes, although most of these declined as tobacco became the crop of choice (U.S. Office of the Census 1850-1910).

The lumber industry greatly affected Woodward Township and the town of Lockport throughout the late nineteenth century. The canal and the lumber booms constructed between 1834 and 1847 created the need for hotels and retail services for laborers working in the lumber industry. All lumber coming down the West Branch of the Susquehanna stopped in Lockport either to be milled and transported on the canal system or to be guided through the lumber shoot constructed near the dam. Other prosperous industries in Woodward Township included the Widmann

Brewery and the Queen's Run Fire Brick Manufacturing and Coal Mining Operation (Milner 1985: 19).

The 1889 flood devastated the lumber industry and the canal system; however, according to agricultural census data from that period, Clinton County's agricultural production as a whole remained relatively steady. Tobacco production, however, took a plunge from about 993,401 pounds produced in 1880 to 510,041 pounds produced in 1890. Production surged in Clinton County around 1900, with 1,221,730 pounds of tobacco reported in the agricultural census. By 1910, however, tobacco production was again on the decline, with only 332,364 pounds cultivated. Crops such as corn, oats, wheat, barley, potatoes, and orchard products became the main crops cultivated in the county in the early-twentieth century (U.S. Office of the Census 1880-1910).

By 1900, Pennsylvania's agricultural economy was declining and the trend continued throughout the twentieth century. In 1910, 12.8 percent of those employed in Pennsylvania worked on farms; in 1960, that percentage had dropped to 2.7. Farm employment fell from 320,000 people in 1910 to 120,000 in 1950. From 1900 to 1925, the number of farms in Pennsylvania declined from 225,000 to 146,887. This trend is demonstrated on the Probst farm as Samuel's son, Charles W., ceased tobacco cultivation in the 1950s, as production was no longer profitable. Samuel Probst's grandson, Charles, chose work in the industrial field rather than continue to make the farm the family's first source of income. Clinton County in general turned to industrial development following the damage to the canal system from the 1889 flood and the national economic depression of the 1890s (Stevens 1964).

II. SITE HISTORY

At the time of white settlement in the late eighteenth century, Monseytown was divided into two tracts. The lower was purchased by Col. Cookson Long of Bald Eagle Township, and the upper tract, where the Probst property is located, was purchased by William Dunn. Dunn was one of the first white settlers in the area today known as Clinton County, who arrived on the Great Island in 1769. In 1795, Dunn became the owner of 300 acres beginning at the upper end of Monseytown and running down-river. In 1797, Dunn sold his "patent" on Monseytown to his son-in-law, Johnson Buckley, who had been living in the area for a number of years. In 1803, Buckley in turn sold the property to Johann W. Bartholemew, who claimed the lower section of the property, and his son-in-law, Adam Smith, Sr., who claimed the upper section of the property. Adam Smith, Sr., bought a share of Bartholemew's property in 1806 and, at his death in 1846, conveyed the extreme section of upper Monseytown to his only son, Adam Smith, Jr. (*Lock Haven Express* 1942: 253).

The Smiths were some of Woodward Township's earliest settlers and farmers. The agricultural census of Clinton County indicates that in 1850, Adam Smith, Jr., owned 100 acres of improved and ten acres of unimproved land in Woodward Township, and that his farm, valued at \$10,000, was producing wheat, rye, Indian corn, oats, potatoes, and butter. The Smith Farm House, indicated on an 1862 atlas as owned by "A. Smith", was a thirteen-room wood shingle building located on the "Great Road" bordering the north bank of the West Branch of the Susquehanna River, a section which is no longer a part of the Probst property (Charles Probst, personal interview, October 1991). In 1850, Adam Smith's property was among the most valuable in the township, second only to the property of John Hanna, another large landholder in Woodward Township. In 1860, Smith's farm was somewhat smaller and less productive than in 1850 (U.S. Office of the Census 1850). In 1865, at age 65, Adam Smith conveyed a portion of his

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property to his son, John W. Smith, who was born on the property in 1829, although he no longer resided on the property after 1852. John Smith's accomplishments included serving as Clinton County auditor, sheriff, mayor of Lock Haven, and associate judge (Linn 1883: 672). In 1874, the Smith family conveyed 100 acres to Isaac Shaffer for \$12,300 (Clinton County Legal Record 1874: Z-141).

Little is known about Shaffer except that he was of German descent, was an officer of the Great Island Lodge in 1882, and was a member of St. John's Evangelical Church in Lock Haven. From 1852 until 1855, Shaffer co-owned and operated a water-powered saw mill on Hyner's Run (Linn 1883: 534). It is believed that Shaffer did not occupy the property but that his son, William Perry Shaffer, resided there and farmed the property. Isaac Shaffer is said to have lived in Lock Haven on the site of the present post office building (*Lock Haven Express* 1942: 257). The 1880 census indicates that the value of the property was \$14,175, and at that time, "Perry" Shaffer was cultivating tobacco, the first indication of this activity on the property. It appears that Indian corn and tobacco were the two primary crops cultivated on the Shaffer farm by 1880 (U.S. Office of the Census 1860-1880).

In 1902, the property contained 100 acres and "a two-story frame dwelling house, a frame barn, tobacco shed and outbuilding" (CCLR 1902: H/172). After Isaac Shaffer's death in 1904, the property was conveyed to William P. Shaffer, who sold the 100 acres to Samuel Probst in 1906 for \$7,250. The 1910 population census indicates that at that time, Probst's household included himself (age 52), wife Agnes (age 41), daughter Lizzie A. (age 16), and sons, Charles W. (age 15) and Hayes D. (age 11). Probst, who was born in Switzerland and became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 1865 at age seven, farmed throughout his adult life. His family lived in the Smith farmhouse between 1906 and 1916 until he and local contractor and brother-in-law, Clair Chambers, constructed the present farmhouse and barn between 1916 and 1918. Probst was accidentally killed in a hunting accident in 1926 at age 68 and was survived by his wife, Agnes, two sons, Charles W. and Hayes D., and three daughters. His obituary states that he was "one of the best known citizens of Woodward Township" (*Lock Haven Express* 1926).

Although it is not known specifically what crops Probst cultivated on his property, census records indicate that in the early twentieth century, Clinton County was producing a large amount of tobacco, potatoes, orchard products, corn, oats, and wheat. Charles Probst, Jr., the property's present owner and grandson of Samuel Probst, indicates that Samuel and his son, Charles, Sr., cultivated tobacco, wheat, oats, barley, and some orchard products throughout the early to mid-twentieth century (U.S. Office of the Census 1890-1910).

The flood of 1936 was devastating to the Probst family and farm. Present on the property prior to 1936 were at least one barn, a frame garage, summer kitchen, corn crib, smokehouse, brooder house, chicken house, pig pen, two tobacco sheds, as well as the brick veneer Probst farm house and frame Smith farm house. It is unknown if any outbuildings associated with the earlier Smith farmstead were still standing at this time, except perhaps the tobacco sheds and a barn. According to the present owner, the flood took all but the two houses, the barn, the summer kitchen, and the corn crib. The Red Cross organization offered assistance to local farmers, including Charles Probst, Sr., through a program of rebuilding destroyed property with the condition that owners not sell their property for profit within the following ten years. Charles' sisters, co-owners of the property, declined this assistance and so lost the majority of the farm's outbuildings as the family did not have the funds to reconstruct them. Charles Probst, the present owner, recalls that the summer kitchen property was dislodged during the flood but was returned to its original location (Charles Probst, personal interview, October 1991).

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Samuel's wife, Agnes Probst, resided on the property until her death in 1944. The property then passed to Charles W. and Edna M. Probst (CCLR 1944: 147-770). In 1955, Charles W. Probst sold several acres of his property along the river, including the Smith farm house, for the creation of a trailer park. It was at this time that the Smith farm house was demolished. Charles W. Probst farmed the property during his ownership until his death in 1958 at the age of 63. During his ownership and management of the property, tobacco was the chief crop cultivated along with wheat, oats, and barley, historically grown in Clinton County and Woodward Township. Two tobacco barns (date unknown) were located close to the Smith farm house according to the present owner. After Charles' death in 1958, the production of tobacco on the farm ceased as it was too labor-intensive to cultivate and because his son, Charles, was not a full-time farmer but also worked at the Piper Aircraft Company. Charles Probst, Jr., cultivated corn, wheat, oats, and hay on the property during his ownership. After his mother's death in 1963, he inherited guardianship of the property, although ownership was split equally among Edna Probst's four children, and has resided there since that time (Charles Probst, personal interview, October 1991).

The 1972 flood did not cause a great deal of damage to the Probst property. Charles Probst reports that no water reached the house and that no buildings were destroyed by the flood. At his wife's death in 1978, Charles Probst ceased farming activities except for boarding horses until the mid-1980s and leased most of the remaining seventy-five acres of his grandfather's farm to local farmers.

An attempt to locate historic site plans for the Samuel Probst Farm was unsuccessful due to its isolated location. The present owner, Charles Probst, provided historic photographs of the farm house and barn dating from the 1940s. He also provided an oral description of the farm layout at the time of the 1936 flood, which serves as the sole historic site plan for the property. His description pertained only to the area immediately surrounding the farm house, however; he had no knowledge of the location of the tobacco sheds and the frame house, except that they were sited near the river.

III. SITE DESCRIPTION

The seventy-five-acre Samuel Probst Farm Complex is located in the northern end of Monseytown Flats, surrounded by foothills in rural Woodward Township and includes four original buildings and two non-original buildings: the Samuel Probst Farm House, barn, summer kitchen, and corn crib; and a concrete block garage and wood shed (see site plan for building arrangement and relationship). The building complex is situated on a rise approximately 150 feet south of Legislative Route 18011. A winding gravel drive leads to the complex. The Probst Farm House is oriented northeast toward the road and is surrounded by informal shrubbery and shade trees. The summer kitchen, corn crib and barn form the perimeter of an open grassy space of approximately one-quarter acre in size. The summer kitchen is oriented to the southeast and is located southwest of the house. The barn contains doors on all four facades and is located southwest of the house. The corncrib is oriented northeast and located south of the house.

A few shade trees are located close to the northeast facade of the house, and trees line the northwest side of the driveway. Agricultural fields are located to the southeast of the driveway. Corn fields lie to the northwest of the building complex. To the southeast of the complex is a strip of land containing a trailer park, and beyond is the West Branch of the Susquehanna River.

Photographs in the possession of owner Charles Probst taken of the house and barn illustrate the informal landscape character of the farm. The grassy areas are unmowed and paths are worn between the house and outbuildings. No shrubbery existed around the house historically.

The farm's two non-original buildings are a circa 1954 concrete block garage constructed on the site of a former frame garage. A wood shed is located north of the building complex, close to L.R. 18011.

IV. SOURCES

A. Architectural drawings: None.

B. Historic views:

Owner Charles Probst retains photographs of the Probst House and Barn (see HABS Nos. PA-5523-A and -B) taken circa 1940.

C. Interviews: Probst, Charles. 1991. Interview by Susan C. Nabors, October, Woodward Township, Clinton County, Pennsylvania.

D. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Clinton County Legal Records. Lock Haven, Pennsylvania.

Hannegan, Susan. *General History and Description of Clinton County, Preliminary Research Report, Clinton County Historic Sites Survey, 1985-86*. Harrisburg, PA: Bureau of Historic Preservation, 1986.

_____. *Samuel Probst House*. Pennsylvania Historic Resource Survey Form 035-WW-115. Harrisburg, PA: Bureau of Historic Preservation, 12 June 1986.

U.S. Office of the Census. Manuscript Agricultural Schedule, Woodward Township, Clinton County, Pennsylvania, 1850-1880; 1900-1910. Microfilm on file at the National Archives, Philadelphia Branch.

U.S. Office of the Census. Manuscript Population Schedule, Clinton County, Pennsylvania, 1850-1910.

Vento, Frank J., Philip T. Fitzgibbons, Scott D. Heberling, and James Herbstritt. *Phase I Inventory Investigations of Potentially Significant Prehistoric and Historic Period Cultural Resources for the Lock Haven Flood Protection Project, Clinton County, Pennsylvania*. Prepared for the Baltimore District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers by Vendel Enviro-Industrial Consultants, 1989.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Linn, John Blair. *History of Centre and Clinton Counties*. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1883.

Lock Haven Express, *History of Monseytown, Fertile Farm Flats Above Lockport Area*, March 16, 1942.

Lock Haven Express. Obituary of Clair Chambers. 13 February 1942.

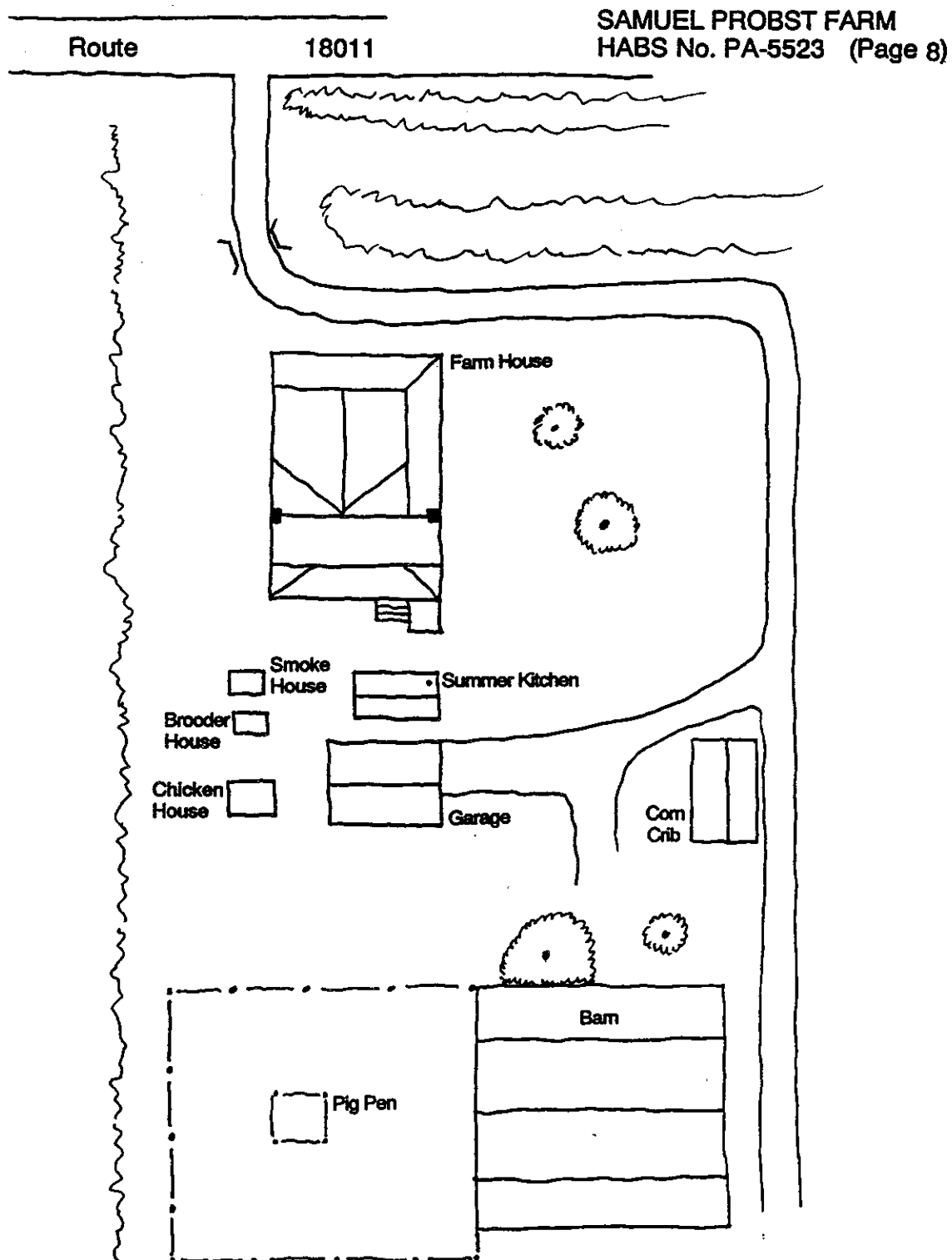
Maynard, D.G. *Historical View of Clinton County*. Lock Haven, PA: The Enterprising Printing House, 1875.

Richie and Stranahan. *Map of Lock Haven, Flemington, and Lockport*. Philadelphia: Richie and Stranahan, 1869. Located at the Clinton County Historical Society.

Walling. *Map of Clinton County, PA*. New York: Way, Palmer & Co., 1862. Located at the Ross Library, Lock Haven.

V. PROJECT INFORMATION

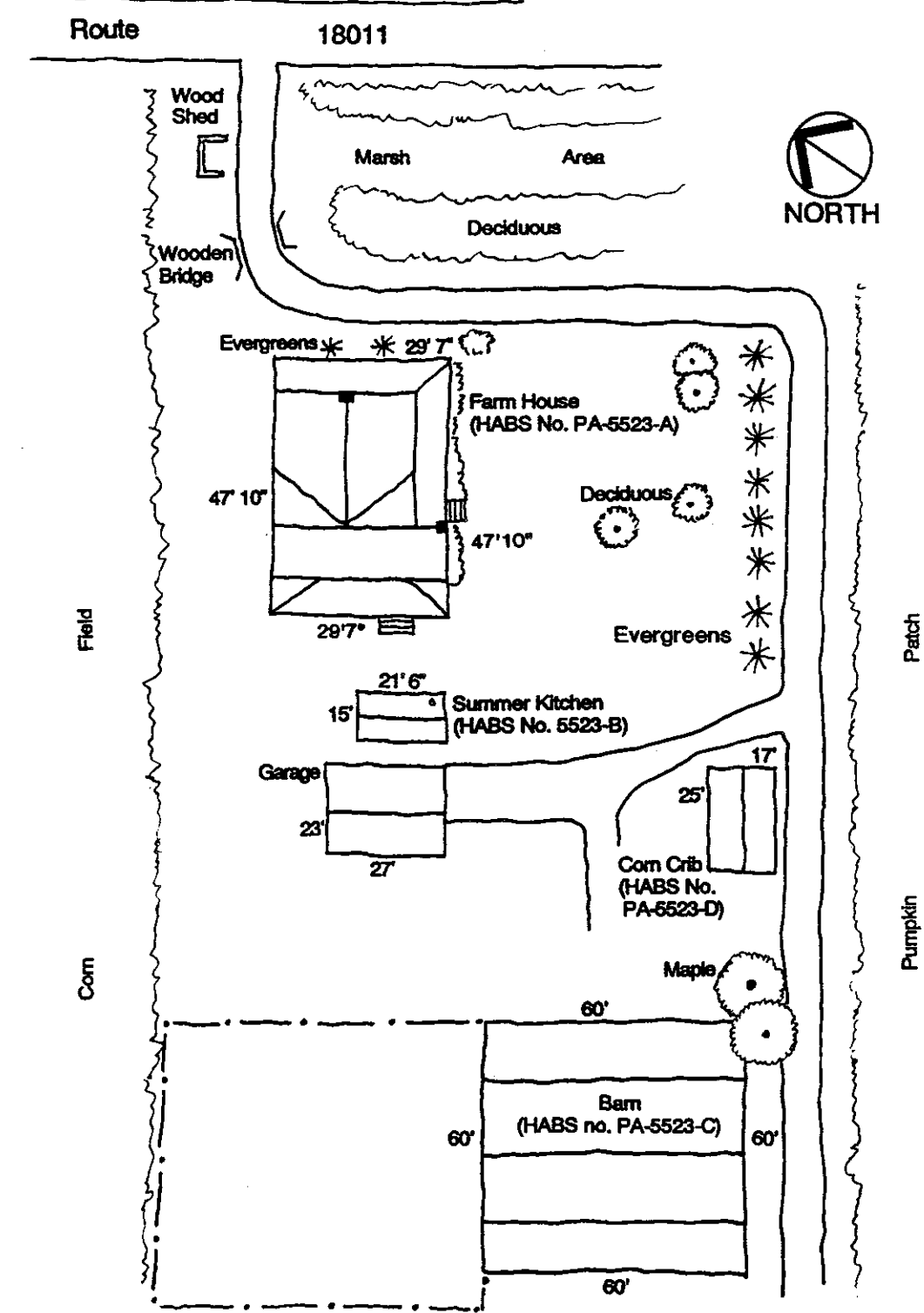
Documentation was undertaken in October and November 1991 in accordance with a Memorandum of Agreement between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Baltimore District, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, and the Lock Haven Area Flood Protection Authority. The documentation serves as a mitigative measure for the treatment of historic properties that were identified and evaluated in a series of studies and that would be affected by the proposed Lock Haven flood protection project. Documentation was prepared for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Baltimore District, by the Historic Preservation Group of Kise Franks & Straw, Inc., Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: M. Todd Cleveland, project manager; Susan C. Nabors, historian; Martin B. Abbot, historian; and Jill Cremer, graphics. Robert Tucher provided the documentary photographs. The Samuel Probst Farm buildings are tentatively slated for removal to accommodate an induced flooding zone. The buildings will be marketed for sale, in an attempt to have them moved off-site. If they cannot be sold, they will be marketed for architectural salvage. The last recourse for the buildings will be demolition.



Source: Interview: Probst, Charles. 1991. Interview with Susan Nebors, October, Lock Haven Vicinity, Clinton County, Pennsylvania;
 Note: Two tobacco sheds and e frame house (now demolished) existed on the property in 1936 (pre-flood). Mr. Probst was not able to locate the former buildings, except that they were sited to the southeast at the river. Because e location for these buildings could not be determined, they ere not depicted on this conjectural site plan.

Conjectural Site Plan, 1936 (Pre-flood)
 Not to Scale
 Date Drawn: 1992
 Prepared By: Jill Cremer

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Existing Site Plan
(Not to Scale)

Date Drawn: 1992
Prepared By: Jill Cremer